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On the Cover: March for Our Lives, March 24, 2018. Photo by Samantha Samuel-Nakka.

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Policing Brown Bodies: Sheriff Arpaio's Reign and Immigration Law Enforcement¹

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While immigration law enforcement is taking place on a national level, Arizona's reputation as "ground zero" in the immigration debate resulted from the intense immigration legislative activity and forceful law enforcement that included white nativist vigilante involvement over the last decade. Trump's pardon of Joe Arpaio, former Sheriff of Maricopa County in Arizona, was a major set-back for immigrant and human rights activists who fought to remove him from office in 2016. The pardon is a pass for elected officials and police to violate the civil rights of Latinos. Arpaio's efforts to reinforce his reputation as the "toughest sheriff" included terrorizing the Latino community in Maricopa County.

His policing and comradery with white nativist anti-immigration vigilantism fits into Trump's current immigration rhetoric. A major component of Joe Arpaio's immigration law enforcement involved political spectacle and symbolic politics, which normalized human and civil rights violations and legitimated racism toward Mexicans and other racialized immigrants. I begin by reviewing the largely forgotten legislation passed in 1995, the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA).

Next, I examine the strategies and practices by the Maricopa Sheriff Department during Joe Arpaio's tenure as sheriff to point to the way that immigration law enforcement served as a spectacle that legitimizes vigilante activities. Vigilante activities are examined by focusing on anti-immigrant organizations' activities allowed during immigration protests. *Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA)*

To understand Trump's characterization of Mexicans and Joe Arpaio's policing campaign against Mexicans and other racialized Latinos, we must remember that the foundation for claiming that Mexican immigrants are criminals (rapists and drug dealers) was solidified in the legislation passed after the Oklahoma bombing to deter terrorism. The Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) combined immigration, criminal and terrorism into one legislation, which blurred the distinctions between "alien immigrant" and "criminal." Eliminating the distinction between undocumented workers and criminals provided Arpaio the platform to enter center stage in the immigration debate. In previous immigration legislation, being an "alien immigrant" was an administrative violation attached to one's status upon entering the U.S. without documentation.

This category included people who had overstayed their visas or had expired green cards, as well as some other noncriminal circumstances. "Criminal aliens" referred to immigrants who committed a crime or were engaged in illegal behavior. The third category of alien immigrants identified in this legislation are persons the state identifies as posing a grave risk to national security and are deportable as terrorists.

The significance of symbolic
politics and political spectacles is
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communities of color.

Co-mingling immigration and terrorism policies "fueled passage of a new summary exclusion procedure in 1996 by which a noncitizen could be bared admission into the country at the port of entry by an INS officer without judicial review" and the definition of "aggravated felony" was broadened and subjected immigrants to deportation without judicial review and mandatory detention.

Placing immigration under Department of Homeland Security provided the basis for nativist groups to argue that all immigrants are criminal and should be addressed with the same aggressive law enforcement aimed at terrorists, drug dealers and human smugglers. In establishing the Department of Homeland Security, immigration and criminal law enforcement were officially combined under the rhetoric of counter terrorism. Raids, detention, deportation and surveillance of noncitizens all became the concern of counterterrorism legislation, which included the USA Patriot Act, the Homeland Security Act and the enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act.

Politicians promoting an anti-immigration position frequently use carefully selected sound bites containing metaphors to highlight the “alien,” “foreign,” and “inferior” characteristics of non-citizens.

By outlining the Office of Detention and Removal’s mission around concerns of public safety and national security, the collateral damage to families and communities was minimized or ignored. Connecting the War on Terror and the War on Drugs was a smooth transition into a campaign against narco-terrorism in 2002. Raids, detention, deportation and surveillance of noncitizens all became the concern of counterterrorism legislation. Substantive changes under Homeland Security legislation provided the foundation for emerging state and local anti-immigrant ordinances, increased use of surveillance and racial profiling, police engaging in unlawful breaking and entering of private residents, and other violations of the Fourth Amendment.

Overview of Symbolic Politics and Political Spectacles in Immigration Discourse

The significance of symbolic politics and political spectacles is in identifying the real

consequences and costs of draconian immigration policy on communities of color. Coverage of political spectacles in the media serves to blur or erase public memory and condones racial profiling and violence against Latinos as unavoidable collateral damage in maintaining national security. Modifying immigration raids to use similar equipment, strategies and armed military force deployed in major drug raids renders immigrants as dangerous and a threat to society. The public spectacle of armed federal agents with rifles and bulletproof vests raiding homes, work sites and shopping malls reinforces support for more funding and resources toward immigration enforcement and the passage of draconian laws. These tactics serve to create an illusion that the government is responding to a major danger threatening the country. These political actions have been called “pseudo-events” that provide public entertainment framed as news. Press coverage of these pseudo-events has little if any context and most importantly do not report human and civil rights violations.

Numerous researchers have written extensively about the anti-immigration discourse as a major aspect in creating the spectacle and symbolic policies. Immigrant scholars note the inflated metaphors used to describe migration from Mexico as a crisis (e.g., Chavez 2001, 2008; Otto 2002). Politicians promoting an anti-immigration position frequently use carefully selected sound bites containing metaphors to highlight the “alien,” “foreign,” and “inferior” characteristics of non-citizens. Symbolic language and spectacles clearly establish that immigration poses a national threat.

The anti-immigrant discourses that claim that immigrants pose a cultural, security and economic threat, are based on an ideology of white injury...

Agencies and news coverage of activities refer to persons arrested in terms related to non-humans such as “net of 56 captured” or “rounded-up.” Terms used to describe immigration raids and deportation programs add to the spectacle (such as, ‘combat’, ‘fighting’). The titles of immigration operations also capture the imagination (for example, Operation Return to Sender, Detention and Removal Operations, National Fugitive Operations Program, Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security, Operation Gatekeeper). Describing raids as the pursuit of investigations of violent crimes, human smuggling, gang organized crime activity, sex-related offenses, narcotics smuggling, and money laundering adds to the drama.

The U.S. government has a long immigration history of responding to the ideology of white injury and in creating fear by scapegoating migrants for social problems.

The military tone established in homeland security discourse and the increasing number of nativist extremist groups sets the background for claiming a Mexican invasion, a war within our borders and the threat immigrants and their families pose to the economic and security well-being of citizens’ families (Romero 2008). Interrogating anti-immigration discourse is crucial in following the immigration debate, policy, and law enforcement. A major ideology embedded in each continues to be white injury.

The anti-immigrant discourses that claim that immigrants pose a cultural, security and economic threat, are based on an ideology of white injury and casts white middle-class citizens as the victims (Cacho 2012). The list of white injury includes the erosion of public education, high unemployment and crime rates, the gang and drug problems, insufficient health



Source: Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement

care, reverse discrimination and the subordination of English and “white” culture. Instead, responsibility of the country’s problems is placed upon non-citizens employed as day or low-wage workers attempting to improve their living conditions. An ideology of white injury works as a significant symbolic device in establishing ambiguous meanings to arouse strong xenophobia feelings based on emotional narratives. Accurate facts and context can thus be ignored.

The U.S. government has a long immigration history of responding to the ideology of white injury and in creating fear by scapegoating migrants for social problems. Since Operation Wetback, immigration raids have been used to respond to unemployment and a sluggish economy.

Arpaio’s Use of Symbolic Politics and Political Spectacles

Arpaio’s tenure as Maricopa County Sheriff in Arizona demonstrates the use of state and federal legislation, along with the use of spectacle and symbolic politics to police brown bodies and create a haven for anti-immigrant vigilantes. Arpaio was elected Sheriff of Maricopa County in 1993 and served for 24 years. He finally lost re-election to Democrat Paul Penzone in the last election. Arpaio first made international news for his human rights violations by establishing a tent prison in the Arizona desert, banning coffee and cooked

Arpaio's most significant use of symbolic language was the constant reference to raids as "crime suppression sweeps," which created the symbolic illusion of eradicating crime rather than racial profiling...

meals and reestablishing chain gangs. As the anti-immigrant sentiment intensified in Arizona, Arpaio's first move to gain center stage in the national immigration spectacle began by offering jail rooms to detain immigrants and obtaining funding to establish a country-wide immigration law enforcement program (Doty 2009).

Arpaio signed the controversial 287 (g) agreement² between Maricopa County and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which allowed him to cross train sheriff deputies in immigration enforcement. ICE granted Maricopa County "the most robust 287 (g) contract in the country" (Shahani and Greene 2009:24). In September 2006, the Law Enforcement Agency Response (LEAR) program began in Arizona and ICE agreed to provide "a more comprehensive response" when officers encountered suspected illegal aliens (ICE 2008). The director of the Phoenix Office of Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) field office claimed that "One of ICE's top enforcement priorities is to improve public safety in Arizona communities. . . By focusing our resources on programs that identify criminal aliens for removal from the United States, we are succeeding in our mission to keep foreign-born criminals off the streets in Arizona" (ICE 2008).

After the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) expanded his power to engage in random street raids under the 287 (g) program, Arpaio unleashed a series of raids on Latino communities throughout Maricopa County. His rampant campaign of racial profiling was not hampered by local police

chiefs' and city council members' disapproval of his activities or the indictments for civil rights abuses or law suits resulting from these actions. While Arpaio's history of human rights violations expanded during his five terms in office, his immigration law enforcement demonstrated the strongest link between creating a public spectacle and legitimating hate-groups and anti-immigration campaigns.

Arpaio's most significant use of symbolic language was the constant reference to raids as "crime suppression sweeps," which created the symbolic illusion of eradicating crime rather than racial profiling or committing civil and human rights violations. The public was notified that all persons arrested were criminals and stopped for criminal behavior. By targeting neighborhoods with a high concentration of Mexican and immigrant families, the link between crime and immigrants was reinforced in the public mind. Reports on the number of persons arrested in a "Crime Suppression Sweep" were immediately released to the press with little distinction made between the precise numbers of violent criminals arrested and immigrants detained for "being out of status" or undocumented.

Armed with long barrel shotguns and at times tear gas, Latino neighborhoods were raided in a manner that any observer could conclude the operations were targeting an imminent threat.

Local immigration raids and sweeps were staged to demonstrate government action is being taken to protect its citizens and regain jobs and benefits. Drama was produced by using work places and Latino communities as political stages. Law enforcement officers arrive with menacing props and costumes and chase individuals perceived as immigrants based on their race, without regard to their personal safety or consequences to their families. Gradually, the spectacle included SWAT-team style



Source: Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement

immigration raids on homes, previously reserved for the War on Drugs. Raids have taken place across the country but civil and human rights violations under Sheriff Arpaio were particularly evident in Maricopa County in Arizona. Sheriff Arpaio choreographed his use of 287 (g) agreement by establishing areas for citizenship inspection stops and for raids and sweeps.

Given the lack of support from city council members and police chiefs in the country, he made concerted efforts to demonstrate the need and urgency for these police actions. Organizing the sequence of actions for county sheriffs, voluntary posse and participating ICE officials, Arpaio set the police action in motion, provided the media and news reporters with adequate access and staged press releases. He usually arrived with his fleet of Ford Econoline vans that were clearly marked in red lettering with the following: “HELP SHERIFF JOE ARPAIO FIGHT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION & TRAFFICKING CALL 602.876.4145 WITH TIPS ON ILLEGAL ALIENS.” Arpaio manufactured a media circus by establishing a mobile command center. His excessive use of sheriff deputies and posse in each operation, coupled with extravagant and highly visible vehicles, created a war-like zone. Armed with long barrel shotguns and at times tear gas, Latino neighborhoods were raided in a manner that any observer could conclude the

operations were targeting an imminent threat. The massive show of weapons and police presence instilled a sense of crisis. Arpaio’s highly visible operations enforced the notion that all immigrants were criminals and dangerous.

During the spring of 2009, Arpaio incorporated another controversial symbol into the raid ritual by issuing his deputies protective gear kits consisting of face masks and gloves to use when encountering and arresting Mexican immigrants. After making a news release of the need to protect deputies and jail staff from the risk of swine flu exposure, he provided the media with visual images of law enforcement agents using surgical masks and gloves, which clearly conveyed the message that Mexican immigrants posed a health threat to officers and citizens.

The fact that surgical masks do not combat the virus was unimportant since the only point of issuing protective gear kits was continuing the spectacle of the threat of immigration. The news release attributed the presence of tuberculosis and chicken pox in jails to detained immigrants. Using infectious diseases as one of the symbols to identify the threat that Mexican immigrants posed in the U.S. was a completely planned and staged event. The protective gear for dealing with “suspected illegal immigrants” marked all non-citizens, particularly Latinos, as a threat to public health.

One of Arpaio’s most outrageous use of terror were a series of raids that targeted the town of Guadalupe...

The prop that led to one local newspaper to claim “Sheriff Arpaio’s Reign of Terror” was the black ski masks that members of Arpaio’s posse wore when accompanying Maricopa County sheriffs during raids in 2008. Sheriff Arpaio maintained a civilian posse for 16 years. They had official insignia, and many drove unmarked cars. He unleashed the posse for immigration raids. They chased down

individuals they felt were undocumented and when they worked alone, they held suspected undocumented immigrants until officers arrived. Some members of the posse were also members of Nativist and anti-immigrant groups.

One of Arpaio's most outrageous use of terror were a series of raids that targeted the town of Guadalupe, a town consisting of one square mile between Tempe and Phoenix, Arizona. Originally founded by Yaqui Indians at the turn of the century, the town is now the home of both Yaqui and Mexican immigrant and Mexican American residents. Yaqui Indians have ancestral roots in Mexico. There are about 5,500 residents.

After two days of raiding the one-mile radius of Guadalupe with 200 deputies and members of Arpaio's posse, only nine immigrants were arrested...

Unfortunately, as a small community, Guadalupe does not have its own police force and relies on the services of Maricopa County Sheriff's Department. Arpaio conducted a two-day raid. The first day, he established his Command center at the Dollar Store. Residents who protested the raids were targeted for special surveillance.

This was also the day of celebration for the town because the church was holding confirmation for the children. On the second day, Arpaio moved his Command Center because the national office of the Dollar Store complained that he did not have permission to use their parking lot.

Residents were stopped by masked and armed men while driving or walking, others were chased as they ran to their homes for refuge. After two days of raiding the one-mile radius of Guadalupe with 200 deputies and members of Arpaio's posse, only nine immigrants were arrested for not having adequate documentation to be in the U.S.

Sheriff Arpaio's raids profiled immigrants who were working poor and were of Mexican ancestry.



Source: Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement

This type of policing has terrorized low-income communities, particularly children and the elderly. Sheriff Arpaio's raids profiled immigrants who were working poor and were of Mexican ancestry. Reasons used for stopping drivers included: walking with open containers, broken taillights, improper use of horn, children appeared to be bouncing up and down in backseat and not wearing seatbelts, expired tags. Former Phoenix Mayor Gordon criticized Arpaio's policing as a sanctuary for felons because during this time there were 40,000 warrants that his office had not served, and the sweeps had little impact on arresting criminals or human smugglers. These policing priorities are reminders of the high price Mexican

communities pay for the ideology of white injury.

Mainstream media and elected officials assisted in normalizing these immigration practices by engaging in the chronic use of anti-immigration terms, which functioned to induce uncritical responses and erased doubts of inhumanity. One way that resistance was silenced was by linking anti-immigration campaigns to “patriotism” and characterizing involvement in anti-immigration as patriotic acts.

The claim to patriotism by anti-immigrant and vigilante groups frequently included the display of numerous U.S. flags, highlighting leaders’ veteran records, and using recognized icons, such as Uncle Sam or Rosie the Riveter (Romero 2008). In identifying anti-immigrant politicians and law enforcement officers as standing up to the threat that immigration poses, people opposing and protesting these immigration law enforcement practices were then painted as enemies of the state.

Keeping the activists under police surveillance contributed to condoning the actions of Arpaio’s armed supporters...

Part of the choreographed event of setting up the spectacle was assigning police officers or sheriffs to monitor the protestors. This was done by creating a border with barricades and officers standing behind while facing the activists rather than Arpaio’s supporters. Even though activists obtained permits to protest, were well organized and never carried weapons, they became the focus of the police gaze. American Freedom Riders arrived on the motorcycles wearing leather clothing with red, white, and blue patches to the protests.

Signs and banners contributed additional symbols of patriotism. Banners and signs containing red, white and blue background or lettering carried messages of support for Arpaio.

Nativist patriotism not only appropriated anti-immigration as the only patriotic stance on immigration but defined the criteria of citizenship as being a mono-lingual English speaker. American Freedom Riders frequently arrived at the protest events armed and freely physically intimidated human rights activists without police interference while riding their motorcycles.

The white driver was told he was stopped for speeding but not given a citation. However, Mr. Ortega was asked for identification...

The Southern Law Poverty, along with numerous civil rights organizations, tracked the increasing number of nativist extremist and hate groups targeting immigrants in Arizona. Many of these groups also have strong links to other anti-immigrant groups, such as Save Our State, Colorado Minutemen, and California Coalition for Immigration Reform. Almost all of these groups have members in Maricopa County and are active supporters of Arpaio.

The symbolism created by policing protestors marked the activists as potential law-breakers. Keeping the activists under police surveillance contributed to condoning the actions of Arpaio’s armed supporters and created the appearance that activists were not law-abiding citizens. The armed police officers monitoring the protestors further enhanced the image of immigrants as dangerous and activists as unpatriotic.

A strategy used by anti-immigration groups to appear patriotic and mainstream included volunteering and contributing to political campaigns and inviting potential candidates and politicians to speak at their rallies. Joe Arpaio was a frequent invited speaker at their rallies.

White supremacist political party, American Third Position, announced donation to fund defense of AZ SB 1070.³ Their mission

statement declared the group existed “to represent the political interests of white Americans.”

History of Lawsuits

Over his 24 years as sheriff, Arpaio was accused of numerous practices of police misconduct, mistreatment of prisoners, abuse of power, misuse of funds, failure to investigate sex crimes, unlawful enforcement of immigration laws, and election law violations. Over 2,700 lawsuits, concerning violations at the county’s prisons alone, were filed against Arpaio in Federal and County Courts, which is 50 times the number in New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston combined. However, the lawsuit that finally ended his career was the class action lawsuit, *Ortega Melendres vs. Arpaio*, which charged Sheriff Arpaio and MCSO (Maricopa County Sheriff Office) of instituting a pattern of targeting Latino drivers and passengers.

During the trial, Arpaio was found to have condoned and participated in circulating racist commentary about Latinos...

In the case of plaintiff, Mr. Manuel de Jesus Ortega Melendres, his encounter with MCSO officers occurred as a passenger rather than a driver during the sweep on September 26, 2007. The white driver was told he was stopped for speeding but not given a citation. However, Mr. Ortega was asked for identification. After showing his U.S. visa, his Mexican Federal Voter Registration and a stamped permit valid until Nov. 2007, issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, he was ordered to get out of the vehicle.

He was submitted to excessive force and unprofessional behavior as he was patted down and handcuffed. In his four-hour detention in jail, he was not read his Miranda rights, given the opportunity to make a phone call, told why he was being detained or provided a Spanish-language translator. Later he was taken to the local ICE office and his handcuffs were

removed. After a total of nine hours, with no water or food, the ICE official reviewed Mr. Ortega’s identification documents and he was released without any paper trail other than a case number. At no time was Mr. Ortega read his Miranda rights, informed of charges or given any information about the reason for the arrest.

U.S. District Judge G. Murray Snow found that Maricopa County sheriff’s deputies targeted Latinos during traffic stops with the presumption that they entered the country illegally and found their practices of the sheriffs discriminatory based on race that resulted in prolonged traffic stops and baseless extended detentions in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

During the trial, Arpaio was found to have condoned and participated in circulating racist commentary about Latinos and created “a general cultural of bias” in the sheriff’s office. In 2011, Judge Snow issued an order mandating changes in MCSO to eliminate misconduct and future violations of the community’s constitutional rights. Arpaio ignored the 2011 order to stop immigration enforcement when he lost the federal 287(g) agreement.

Arpaio also violated court orders to audio and video record of all traffic stops, increase training and monitoring employees, and maintain comprehensive records. Judge Snow found him in contempt of court and scheduled sentencing for October 2017.

As the state shifts immigration policy to counter terrorism, vigilante groups are provided a shield of patriotism to conceal their nativist and racist attacks against Latinos in the U.S.

Although, Arpaio was unlikely to do jail time, Trump pardoned him on August 25th. Following Trump’s pardon, attorneys filed motions to have the entire criminal case against him expunged from his record. U.S. District Judge Susan Bolton ruled the conviction stands

because the pardon only affected possible punishments. Later in the fall, Arpaio announced he was running for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate being vacated by Republican Jeff Flack. Arpaio asked an appeals court to overturn the judge's decision to uphold his criminal contempt conviction despite being pardoned by Trump. Immigrant and human rights activists who fought to remove him from the sheriff's office in 2016 are regrouping to get Latino voter turnout with hopes of getting at least 350,000 Latinos – about one third of those eligible to vote in 2018.

Conclusion

Although I focused on Arpaio's law enforcement practices and his use of spectacle and symbolic politics, we cannot lose sight of state and national government participation in alarmist immigration rhetoric and laws embracing "alien immigrant," "criminal" and "terrorist" as the same category and lending legitimacy to a range of anti-immigration activities conducted by civilians.



Source: The Sociologist

As the state shifts immigration policy to counter terrorism, vigilante groups are provided a shield of patriotism to conceal their nativist and racist attacks against Latinos in the U.S. Anti-immigrant vigilante groups continue to operate without much state interference and are sometimes encouraged or celebrated by public officials. Alarmist immigration rhetoric and laws continue to support draconian measures

particularly targeting immigrants of color and non-citizens residing illegally in the U.S.

Notes

1. Portions of this paper were previously published in "Are Your Papers in Order? Racial Profiling, Vigilantes and America's Toughest Sheriff," *Harvard Latino Law Review*, 14: 337-357 (2011) and "Keeping Citizenship Rights White: Arizona's Racial Profiling Practices in Immigration Law Enforcement," *Law Journal for Social Justice*, 1 (1): 97-113 (2011). Portions of this paper were also presented at a talk at American University on January 25, 2018.

2. The 287(g) program is one of the partnership initiatives of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The program allows a state or local law enforcement entity to enter into a partnership with ICE, under a joint Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), to receive delegated authority for immigration enforcement within their jurisdictions.

3. The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (referred to as Arizona SB 1070) was a legislative Act in the state of Arizona. When it was passed in 2010, it became the broadest and strictest immigration measure passed in Arizona.

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Skipping Class: First-Gen, Working-Class, and Low-Income Students in College

Robert D. Francis

Were you the first in your family to graduate from college? If so, congratulations on defying the odds. During my dissertation fieldwork, I recently sat across the table from a young man who had tears in his eyes when he shared that he was the first in his family to finish *high school*. He hopes to go on to college, perhaps online, but he currently works as a laborer at a steel mill as he saves money and crafts his plan. Unfortunately, the data do not stand in favor of him finishing.

A new study from the National Center for Education Statistics or NCES (Redford and Hoyer 2017) gives a glimpse of the barriers that first generation (first-gen) college students face. When compared with what the study calls their continuing-generation peers, first-gen students were more likely to attend for-profit schools; half as likely to earn a bachelor's degree by ten years from their sophomore years in high school; and more likely to leave college for financial reasons without a degree.

The NCES study might be particularly pessimistic because it uses a narrow definition of first gen: students enrolled in postsecondary education whose parents do not have any postsecondary education experience. What about those students whose parents have some college but no degree? What about an associate's but not a bachelor's? Or what if one parent earned a bachelor's degree but left the family through divorce—or death? And what about those whose parents have a four-year degree but are still poor? Are any of these students first-gen too?

A recent article in *The New York Times* (Sharpe 2017) explored the challenges of defining first-gen. According to the article, the U.S. Department of Education defines first-gen in at least three different ways¹. And a recent working paper (Toutkoushian, Stollberg, and

Slaton 2015) finds that estimates of first-gen students in the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002—the same data source used in the NCES study—can range from 22 to 77 percent, depending on the definition. The first step in better serving first-gen students might be arriving at a shared definition.

A Shot at Middle Class

My case is one of the complex ones. I cannot claim first-gen status, as my Mom earned her bachelor's degree in education at a rural teacher's college. My Dad had his high school diploma, serving active duty as a Marine in Vietnam before settling into a career as a manual laborer.

We might have had a shot at the middle class on their joint incomes, but my Mom, despite her earning power, retired from teaching when I was born. Her view of gender roles, informed by her conservative Protestantism, dictated that she should stay home to raise me and my sister. This left my Dad to provide, and without the benefit of a college degree or union wages, it was always a struggle. While not first-gen, I grew up in what I now consider a working poor family, or perhaps working class, despite having one parent with a BA.

...my freshman roommate...had his own desktop computer for our dorm room, while I relied on the campus computer labs to type and print my papers.

Common Approaches

Working class is another designation that is difficult to pin down. In an unpublished paper by sociologist and class scholar Allison Hurst, a review of sociological journal articles finds no consensus on how scholars operationalize social class. Common approaches utilize parental education or income, and to a lesser degree, parental occupation. None are fully satisfying, but more complex measures often require data not collected by most surveys. And still another vexing category is low-income.

Some of the culture shock for first-gen and working-class students comes from the fact that our undergraduate populations are already polarized, unequal...

What counts as poor? Should we use the federal poverty line, the supplemental poverty measure, Pell eligibility, or something else? Despite the lack of consensus in defining these terms—first-gen, working-class, and low income—we know there is quite a bit of overlap among these three designations. More practically, how do these first-gen and working-class identities play out on our campuses?

Overwhelmed and Familiar

There is good evidence that students from first-gen and working-class backgrounds not only face academic barriers, but cultural ones as well. First-gens can feel overwhelmed (Hertel 2002) and experience self-doubt (Engle, Bermeo, and O’Brien 2006). They often feel inauthentic (Dews and Law 1995; Lubrano 2004; Hurst 2010) on campuses where continuing-gen and middle-class values are the norm (Lightweis 2014; Pascarella et al. 2004; Reay et al. 2009; Stuber 2015).

I remember the jealousy and even resentment I felt toward my freshman roommate because he had his own desktop computer for our dorm room, while I relied on the campus computer labs to type and print my papers. I worked all through college, sometimes sending money home to help my family rather than the reverse.

And as if to crown my college experience with a final social class indignity, I remember my embarrassment when my family chose Bob Evans as the “nice” restaurant where we would celebrate my college graduation. It was what we could afford, and it was culturally familiar. (Truth be told, I didn’t have ideas for any nicer place anyway, which added to the insult as my classmates headed off to what I presumed were more upscale choices.)

Inequities in Education

Some of the culture shock for first-gen and working-class students comes from the fact that our undergraduate populations are already polarized, unequal, and affluent. The Equality of Opportunity Project, led by Raj Chetty, made headlines in 2017 when one of their studies showed that 38 colleges and universities had more students from the top 1% of households than the bottom 60%. (*The New York Times* created an interactive tool with Chetty’s data that allows you to search for your school.²) Results for selected schools in the DCSS area are in Table 1.

Of course, these figures require interpretation, and they might say more about underlying inequalities in education writ large than about any particular institution. Regardless of the composition of our undergraduate populations, there is much that can be done to consider the unique needs of our first-gen, working-class, and low-income students.

Table 1

School	State	National* Rank	Top 1% (\$630k+)	Bottom 60% (<\$65k)
Washington University in St. Louis	MO	1	22%	6%
Georgetown University	DC	12	21%	14%
George Washington University	DC	48	14%	16%
Johns Hopkins University	MD	53	12%	15%
Catholic University	DC	76	7%	12%
American University	DC	124	7%	18%
George Mason University	VA	432	2%	26%
Marymount University	VA	460	2%	38%
Howard University	DC	1024	<1%	47%
University of the District of Columbia	DC	1670	<1%	78%
Trinity Washington University	DC	1931	<1%	77%
Gallaudet University	DC	2101	<1%	56%

*Ranking based on percentage of students from the top 1% of households.

Measure and Proxy

The first step for many schools is collecting better data. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the financial aid form completed by most incoming freshman, has just one crude measure of parental education.

Marymount University in Arlington, where I am an adjunct faculty member, started asking additional questions about first-gen status in their application in 2010. For most schools, Pell eligibility provides a proxy for low-income. Even for schools that track low-income and first-gen, measures of social class are still largely absent. We can start by collecting better data about the first-gen, working-class, and low-income statuses of our students.

...low-income students lack institutional support because their very existence challenges the bottom lines of their schools...

Some schools provide infrastructure to support the unique needs of these students. Marymount University's Office of the First-Year Experience³, while not explicitly dedicated to first-gen and working-class students, focuses on the social and academic transition to college, which can be more fraught for first-gen, working-class, and low-income students. Campuses are also forming student groups for low-income, first-gen, and working-class students, like First-Gens@Michigan. And sociology faculty, for their part, are finding ways to add social class considerations into their curriculum⁴.

But as Debbie Warnock (2016) recounts, her efforts as a faculty member to sponsor a first-gen, working-class, and low-income student group ran into many institutional hurdles. From this experience, she drew the provocative conclusion that low-income students lack institutional support because their very existence challenges the bottom lines of their schools: they cost more to admit and sustain, and their lower test scores and poorer graduation rates punish schools in the arms race of the hallowed college ranking systems.

I was recently at a coffee shop in my rural hometown when I noticed that the barista on duty was studying when business was slow. I

asked her about her story. She said she started at a selective liberal arts college about an hour away, but the privilege of her fellow students was unexpected and jarring. She loved her classes and professors, but she said she felt isolated and alone. She left the school after just one semester. Now she is working toward her Associate of Arts (AA) degree at a small branch campus closer to home. Her classes are much less challenging, but the school is a cultural fit. She may be fine in the long run, but how many other stories like hers go unnoticed each semester? Many of the efforts to support first-gen and working-class students on campus are led by faculty and staff who themselves identify as first-gen or working-class.



Source: American Sociological Association

And just as first-gen and working-class undergraduates face challenges, so do scholars with those backgrounds. There is evidence that first-gen and working-class academics often feel like they don't belong (Lee 2017). And while definitive data are lacking, there is still reason to believe that first-gen and working-class scholars are more likely to end up as contingent and non-tenure track faculty (Soria 2016). For those who can relate, a new edited volume of essays, *Working in Class: Recognizing How Social Class Shapes Our Academic Work* (2016), offers empathetic voices. The thirteen essays explore what it means to be a working-class academic in the three primary domains of academic life: teaching, research, and service. These essays are also worthwhile for scholars from more advantaged backgrounds, as they reveal ways in which we all might unintentionally reinforce class-based inequalities in the classroom and our faculty interactions.

There is also the Working-Class Studies Association⁵, formed in 2003 “to promote the study of working-class people and their culture.” This professional association includes a Working-Class Academic Section, designed specifically as a place for scholars who identify as working class.

If you have thoughts about the
place of first-gen and working-
class people within sociology,
please reach out to me at
rfranc15@jhu.edu.

ASA Task Force

The American Sociological Association (ASA), for its part, is wading into these discussions with the formation of a new Task Force on First-Generation and Working-Class People in Sociology⁶. Called into existence by the ASA Council thanks in part to agitation by working-class sociologists, the Task Force—chaired by Vincent Roscigno from Ohio State University—has a three-year charge to explore the state of first-gen, working-class, and low-income people within the discipline. I was fortunate to be named as one of the Task Force’s thirteen members. We began our work in late 2017, which will continue through 2020. Look for us at the 2018 ASA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. If you have thoughts about the place of first-gen and working-class people within sociology, please reach out to me at rfranc15@jhu.edu. This Task Force presents a unique opportunity to make sure the discipline of sociology is no longer skipping class.

Notes

1. The definitions are: no parent in the household has a bachelor’s degree; no education after high school; no degree after high school.
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/18/upshot/some-colleges-have-more-students-from-the-top-1-percent-than-the-bottom-60.html?mcubz=0>
3. <https://www.marymount.edu/Admissions/Accepted-Students/First-Year-Experience>
4. <http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2018/02/the-big-rig-and-the-sociology-of-work.html#more>
5. <https://wcstudiesassociation.wordpress.com/>

6. <http://www.asanet.org/news-events/asa-news/task-force-first-generation-and-working-class-persons-sociology-0>

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Our Fight for Transparency

Janine Gaspari and Elizabeth Mathews

On February 9, 2017, students from Transparent GMU filed a lawsuit against both George Mason University (GMU) and the George Mason University Foundation, Inc. “in hopes of obtaining grant and gift agreements between private donors and the Foundation, which serves as the University’s fundraising arm.” The lawsuit was filed after the George Mason University Foundation, Inc. claimed their 501(c)(3) private status exempted the organization from FOIA requests previously filed by Transparent GMU. This movement is a sustained effort by GMU students, which started in 2014, to push for more transparency regarding private donations to their public university. The group got their trial day in court on April 24, 2018, which was followed by startling emails from the university president that admitted to donor influence in hiring faculty in GMU’s economics department between 2003 and 2011. The activism of students and a partnership with national organization, UnKoch My Campus, has led to significant victories for these persistent students. Janine Gaspari and Elizabeth Mathews are both undergraduate students at GMU, and Transparent GMU campus leaders. Introduction written by Emily McDonald.

Transparent GMU’s Mission

Transparent GMU’s mission statement is to “advocate for transparency as it relates to the corporatization of education and its adverse effects on George Mason University.” As part of that larger mission, the organization is currently focused on increasing transparency in GMU’s relationship with its donors. Many of GMU’s largest donors, particularly the Charles Koch Foundation and affiliates, are known to attach strings to the money they give to universities.

These stipulations impinge on academic freedom and independence in order to promote an ideological agenda. This is fundamentally opposed to the mission of a university, which is to provide a space for free inquiry and research based on empirical evidence. No one should be

able to use private money to influence and/or buy academia.

Transparent GMU v. George Mason University

This lawsuit is focused on a specific set of agreements. The judge’s ruling will determine the extent to which the university foundation, the university, and donor relationships will be impacted.

**GMU had accepted donor
agreements from 2003 to 2011
that fell “short of the standards of
academic independence”...**

It is possible that only the documents we requested will become public, but there is also a possibility that the GMU Foundation will no longer be legally considered exempt from requests based FOIA (Freedom of Information Act), which could bring about much more sweeping impacts. With the recent revelation by President Cabrera that GMU had accepted donor agreements from 2003 to 2011 that fell “short of the standards of academic independence,” our lawsuit is more important than ever. Because there is extreme secrecy and a weak culture of transparency around donor agreements accepted by the GMU Foundation, the scope of this issue at GMU is unmeasurable. Many more of these kinds of documents could be held by the GMU Foundation, but they refuse to release them to the public. Our lawsuit aims to make them do just that. We are saddened that it had to get to this point, and that the university was not more receptive to dialogue outside of the legal system.

In terms of relationships with donors on an individual basis, winning our lawsuit would show donors who wish to have undue influence at our university that they will no longer be able to do so out of the public eye. For donors who simply want to give out of a love for George Mason and its institutions, then our lawsuit should change nothing. A common argument in response to demands for more transparency is that transparency deters donors. There is little evidence suggesting that this is the case. Higher education is better off, not worse off, with a

strong culture of transparency, democratic values, and faculty governance.

The Bigger Picture

Private money is playing an outsized role in our public life, which directly threatens democracy, both in the university and beyond. GMU administration's resistance to transparency is especially problematic because of the role GMU plays in the Koch network's model for structural social change. This is a cycle that was engineered by Richard Fink, one of the Kochs' chief strategists, to transform public life. The cycle includes universities, think tanks, and legislators. Universities produce research that is passed along to think tanks, which then translate that research into digestible policy reports.

**Private money is playing an
outsized role in our public life,
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and beyond.**

The policy reports are then presented to legislators who then can make decisions based on that information. At GMU specifically, the Mercatus Center is an extremely effective Koch-funded think tank and lobbying firm. Thus, when GMU accepts money on terms that the public cannot access, we are unable to hold GMU accountable for their role in this cycle.

Realizing Transparency in Practice

We believe true transparency would have two parts. The first part would be for the university and its foundation to release all of its donor agreements to the public, past and present, to be reviewed for stipulations that give donors undue influence over our education. The second part would be to create university institutions that would give faculty final decision-making power over what kind of donors and agreements GMU will choose to engage with in the future. True transparency would require giving faculty the power to review and get the final say on all donation and gift acceptances. This will ensure

that all donations comply with the standards of academic freedom, and the faculty should determine university governance. The only real way to create lasting change is to empower students, faculty and the public to have a larger role in how our university operates.



Photo by Emily McDonald

Moving the Push for Transparency Forward

This lawsuit is only part of our mission, and the starting point to more activism around donor transparency and academic freedom issues. We hope to continue pushing for full transparency of donor agreements and disaffiliation with donors with proven track records of seeking undue influence. We hope to continue empowering students, faculty, and staff to have a larger role in the governance of the university. That being said, donor agreements are not the only issues that require increased transparency at GMU. We hope to be able to use the momentum that we have seen so far to elevate other issues and campaigns that require increased transparency.

Our work strives to promote democratic decision-making at the university and beyond. We do this by advocating for more transparent donation acceptance policies beyond just our current lawsuit. This is imperative in an age of decreased public funding and increased private higher education funding. Universities are looking to private donors to bring in more revenue. Without strong donation and gift acceptance policies led by faculty, higher education can be up for sale to the highest bidder. Without transparency, universities can take part in shady deals outside of the public eye. This makes it extremely difficult for stakeholders such as students, faculty, alumni, and community members to hold universities accountable for their actions. *Editor's note: The Washington Post carried a story about Transparent GMU on April 24, 2018.*

Art Exhibition Expands the Construction of “American Workers” in the Popular Imagination

Briana Pocratsky

At points in American history, certain types of workers and forms of labor have been hypervisible, while others have been made invisible through processes of value assignment. By analyzing representations of laboring bodies, we can gain an understanding of how society has valued different workers and forms of labor. Similar to the category of “the working class,” “American workers” are often narrowly associated with whiteness, maleness, and industrial labor in the popular imagination. Contemporary dominant constructions of the working class elicit an image of a dirt-covered white man wearing a hard hat while standing, arms crossed, next to heavy machinery in “Small Town, U.S.A.” However, the category “working class,”¹ and the notion of “American workers,” intersects at multiple axes of identity, including but not limited to race, gender, age, and geographic location and also includes the service industry and industrial jobs.²

I visited the National Portrait Gallery to see the current exhibition “The Sweat of Their Face: Portraying American Workers.”³ I was interested in how the exhibition crafts a narrative of “American workers” and if it complicates dominant portrayals of work and workers in the U.S. Featuring approximately 75 works of various media, “The Sweat of Their Face” aims to capture points of the changing and multidimensional landscape of American workers over time and their relationships to labor, power, and emotion. The exhibition presents a range of topics and themes including slavery, war, child labor, exploitation, solidarity, the “everydayness” of work and depictions of heroism, joy, and despair.

Representations

The exhibition displays familiar representations of American workers, such as

the Farm Security Administration documentary photographs during the Great Depression, including Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother” (1936), and the WWII propaganda character and cultural icon associated with Rosie the Riveter. Well-known artists, such as Norman Rockwell, as well as less mainstream portrayals and artists are also included in the exhibition. Many representations unsurprisingly echo themes relating to Karl Marx’s ([1932] 1972) concepts of exploitation and alienation and Max Weber’s “Iron Cage.”⁴ In addition to portrayals directly offering a commentary on social inequalities in relationship to American workers, the exhibition also presents other themes to its audience, such as strength and dignity.

The acrylic on canvas work features a woman of color, a housekeeper, whose back faces the viewer; she is hunched over and cleaning a shower with a squeegee.

The two main entrances to the exhibition are used to loosely bracket representations across time, space, and identities in conceptualizing American workers. One of the entrances includes the work “Pat Lyon at the Forge” (1829, orig.1826) by John Neagle. The oil on canvas painting features Pat Lyon, a blacksmith and businessperson, who was wrongly accused of and imprisoned for robbing the Bank of Pennsylvania (a location that he made locks for). Years after proving his innocence, Lyon commissioned Neagle for the painting (Ward and Moss 2017).

The image features Lyon at the forge, sleeves rolled, and pausing in the midst of manual labor as an apprentice in the background looks at Lyon with admiration. Also in the background is Walnut Street Jail, a reference to his imprisonment (ibid.). Lyon chose to be represented as a laborer, contrary to the popular conventions of the nineteenth century when commissioned portraits were usually

representations that conveyed an elite status (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 2018). Neagle's portrait of Lyon captures the spirit of modern capitalism, illustrating Max Weber's ([1958] 2003) concept of the Protestant work ethic in which hard work, frugality, and industry were at one time signifiers of salvation.

**The faceless white, affluent male
...who leisurely takes a shower
in a Beverly Hills home, seems
unaware of the labor behind the
maintenance of luxury.**

However, Weber argues that these traits have since become untethered from ascetic Protestantism, allowing capitalism to thrive on its own. The artwork at the other entrance of the exhibition is "Woman Cleaning Shower in Beverly Hills (After David Hockney's Man Taking Shower in Beverly Hills, 1964)" (2013) by Ramiro Gomez. The acrylic on canvas work features a woman of color, a housekeeper, whose back faces the viewer; she is hunched over and cleaning a shower with a squeegee.

Gomez's painting references a previous work, David Hockney's "Man Taking Shower in Beverly Hills" (1964), which features a faceless white man, bent over, taking a shower in a very similar setting as the housekeeper from Gomez's painting. Gomez has reframed a number of Hockney's paintings, providing a commentary on class, race, gender, and immigration.

The faceless white, affluent male of Hockney's painting, who leisurely takes a shower in a Beverly Hills home, seems unaware of the labor behind the maintenance of luxury. In an interview, Gomez elaborated on the faceless domestic workers in his artwork in relationship to his reimagining of Hockney's art:

"Culture shapes and shifts as it moves. It influences perception. That is something that Hockney has always involved himself with: perception, the ways of rendering something three-dimensional in two dimensions. With me, I'm very curious how [my] work can re-shape

and re-form what people had previously seen as the California life. People tell me they can't see Hockney's work the same way after. That was the goal for me" (Miranda 2016).

While Gomez's painting makes a statement on its own regarding invisible and unrecognized labor, especially in relationship to the working-class Latinx community in Los Angeles (Ward and Moss 2017), the full extent of Gomez's narrative can only be understood in context with Hockney's work.

Taken together, these works provide a stark contrast of laborers and employers and their social statuses particularly as it pertains to agency and visibility.



Photo by Briana Pocratsky

The direct stare in portraiture of a
blacksmith, a newsboy...
collectively ask the viewer to
pause and linger on the sweat of
American workers.

Moments and Settings

“The Sweat of Their Face” exhibition includes representations of American workers whose identities and labor are often not valued, forgotten, or made invisible in the popular imagination. Representations, which often teeter between individuality and anonymity are never total or complete in relationship to the subjects or the history of which they are a part. Moreover, representation depends on who is behind the camera or the canvas and how the artist chooses to represent a subject. However, the exhibition pulls out moments in time and space across American labor history through fine art representations to highlight some cultural, political, and social settings while attempting to foster empathy along the way.

The direct stare in portraiture of a blacksmith, a newsboy, an enslaved woman, a weaver, a share cropper, a grape picker, a barber, a steel worker, and a sandwich artist or the genre art of the worlds in which work takes place in everyday life, such as a factory, a house, a home, a field, a farm, a mine, a street, an office, or one hundred stories in the sky collectively ask the viewer to pause and linger on the sweat of American workers. “The Sweat of Their Face: Portraying American Workers” will be on display at the National Portrait Gallery until September 3, 2018.

Notes

1. The label “the working class” and how it is conceptualized and measured often masks the complexities of individuals who fall under this category, making clear and concise definitions of “the working class” and other class categories difficult and problematic.
2. For example, depending on the parameters of the definition of working class (in this particular projection, working people without a college degree) and how people identify in terms of race and ethnicity, it is estimated that by 2032, people of color will comprise the majority of the working-class population in the U.S. (Wilson 2016).

3. David C. Ward, the National Portrait Gallery’s former senior historian and co-curator of “The Sweat of Their Face,” explains that the title of the exhibition refers to the Fall in Christianity, or “the biblical judgement that expelled Adam and Eve from paradise and enjoined them to work, that ‘in the sweat of their face, they shall eat bread’” (Ward and Moss 2017: 13).

4. Max Weber ([1958] 2003: 181) contends that the rise of rationalization and bureaucratization is occurring in everyday life. Unchecked rationalization and bureaucracy results in the Iron Cage, in which modern economic order “is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force.”

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Breakfast with a Side of Public Sociology

Maria Valdovinos

In the last issue of *The Sociologist* I wrote about how *Pancake Saturday* (see Valdovinos February 2018) is not just about breakfast or pancakes for that matter (although there are plenty of them to go around), but rather about building a community and a positive social support network among returning citizens in the District. The most recent *Pancake Saturday* gathering was extra special; not only did we get to meet the newest cohort of the *Aspire to Entrepreneurship* program (see Valdovinos October 2017) but breakfast came with a healthy side of *public sociology*. There was far more listening, dialoguing, and community building than there was eating. We were all pleasantly surprised to see Councilmember Charles Allen stop by to meet the cohort's newest members and to learn about the challenges of reentry in the District.

Charles Allen represents Ward 6 on the Council of the District of Columbia.¹ Allen was elected in 2014 and is up for re-election. He chairs the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety² and serves as the Council's liaison with key stakeholders in criminal justice and reentry in the District.³ "The goal is not just to make DC a safe city, but also a just city," Allen said as he shared with everyone his vision and goals for the District if he were to get re-elected.

For the *Aspirants*⁴ at the table, the goal of a "just city," raised many issues of fairness and equity in opportunity, particularly as it pertained to access to traditional jobs, safe and affordable housing and city contracts for the entrepreneurs working to grow their small and local businesses. The *Aspirants* shared specific challenges they encountered in their reentry experiences, such as not being able to obtain paid sick-time benefits and the fact that "ban the box" still resulted in individuals being denied jobs because of a criminal history. Among the returning citizen entrepreneur group, the issue of access to city contracts came up almost

immediately. The *Aspirants* shared that while the desire is to stay local it is not always to stay "small." They also shared that they felt their chances to access city contracts were hurt because they could not donate to campaigns. Allen listened intently, noting that the contracting process should never work in a way where campaign donations give people an advantage in obtaining city contracts. He proceeded to explain the current process of securing and awarding contracts in the District, how that process should work and where it could be improved. Before jumping into another round of questions and answers, Allen thanked everyone for their insight, remarking that he had been unaware of some of the issues raised that morning.

I witnessed the power of linking individual biography and private troubles to public issues...

As a student in public sociology, I have thought long and hard over the last couple of years about the nature of the *public* and our responsibility as social scientists to the discipline and civil society. In the past two years especially, I have worked to develop a series of arguments regarding the need to integrate what I have referred to in those papers as "subaltern knowledge" into criminal justice reform policy. Drawing from Antonio Gramsci's use of "subaltern" in *The Prison Notebooks*, the use of the term is simply intended to describe how 'knowledge' and experiences are frequently and routinely overlooked when they belong to non-hegemonic groups or classes of people that are socially, politically, and geographically on the periphery of hegemonic power structures (Gramsci 1948).

Among the arguments I have made is that the seeming contradiction between public sociology and academic sociology characterizing the "public sociology wars" (Burawoy in Adam et al. 2011) also needs to engage the value placed on alternative and

This is the idea that raising a question about a seemingly private trouble can reveal the collective and socially embedded nature of that problem...

subaltern knowledge by key decision makers (such as policymakers), and the willingness of decision makers to legitimize this kind of knowledge. While far from the ideal of the Habermasian public sphere (where private people gather as a public and have direct access to the state and where this sphere is accessible to everyone), the question and answer forum that I witnessed during the previous *Pancake Saturday* was encouraging. For me, it reinforced the fact that unlike Weber's articulation of the people of the state as an inarticulate mass, the public can in fact be very articulate. In the vein of C. Wright Mills and Charles Gallagher, I witnessed the power of linking individual biography and private troubles to public issues via what I have heard Graham McLaughlin refer to as "the ask." McLaughlin is co-founder and chair of the board at *Changing Perceptions*.⁵ This is the idea that raising a question about a seemingly private trouble can reveal the collective and socially embedded nature of that problem potentially leading to a solution for what is in fact a public issue of wide scope.

Over the course of sociology's history and development, the *publics* of sociology have included educated elites (Weber 1946), intellectuals more generally (Durkheim 1895), intellectuals and the proletariat with the purpose of mobilizing (e.g. see Marx in Tucker 1978, *The Communist Manifesto*), intellectuals with the purpose of giving voice to the poor (e.g. see Addams 1910, *20 Years at Hull House*), White Americans with the purpose of educating them (Du Bois 1903, *The Souls of Black Folk*), the sociological profession with the purpose of promoting reflexivity (Burawoy 2005), feminist activist-scholars with the purpose of "talking the talk" and "walking the walk" alongside testing their theories (Collins 1998), or policy audiences

(Desmond 2016; Wilson 1990). This list is by no means exhaustive. Contrary to some arguments which have been leveraged within the discipline over the years, I would argue that at no point has science and instrumental rationality been sacrificed whether the move has been away from or towards engaged scholarship-activism.

The arguments I have made over the past two years pertaining to subaltern knowledge and criminal justice reform are at their core emancipatory and imply that the next step in the public sociology wars is to work toward the recognition that the co-production of knowledge is a legitimate and necessary enterprise. Such a step could potentially allow for public sociology and professional sociology to be in dialogue regarding the creation of new research programs and methods rather than a focus on the division of roles where the function of professional sociology is to produce knowledge and the role of public sociology is simply to communicate it.

How can we access policy circles to communicate the unintended and potentially harmful outcomes uncovered by the scientific research...?

Such a step could also create necessary and overdue connections with academic circles and policy circles to target urgent problems. In short, we must move from questions of knowledge for *what* (Lynd 1939), *whose* side we are on (Becker 1966) and for *whom* (Lee 1976) to questions such as knowledge *from whom*? To that end, when my turn to ask a question came, I asked Charles Allen what I thought was a simple question. *How can stakeholders such as myself, a sociologist with scientific training, work to connect publics and translate various experiences into forms that are actionable for policy reform? How can we access policy circles to communicate the unintended and potentially harmful outcomes uncovered by the scientific research of some policy reforms (such as ban the box) to policymakers?*



Councilman Allen at Pancake Saturday. Photo by Maria Valdovinos

Allen did not seem to have a concrete answer. Although, he recognized the importance of the connection between research and policy, it seemed that the proposition I had raised was somewhat of a new idea, potentially unexplored territory. Afterwards, however, one of the *Aspirants* came up to me and told me that she really appreciated what I had to say, and that she thought “I was someone to be reckoned with,” before quickly walking away. I have to admit that she left me speechless with her comment. The more I have thought about it, the more I realize the power in *public sociology* to overcome certain counterproductive debates and to refocus that energy into expanding the existing assumptions, theories, concepts, questions so as to catapult the types of changes needed in society. I walked out of that last *Pancake Saturday* with a strong re-assurance that there is

not an essential incompatibility between *public sociology* and *academic sociology*.

Notes

1. For more information about Charles Allen see <http://www.charlesallenward6.com/about>
2. For more information on the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety see <http://www.charlesallenward6.com/judiciary>
3. The stakeholders include the U.S. Attorney’s Office, D.C. Courts, Public Defender Service, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, Pretrial Services Agency, Federal Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Parole Commission.
4. The term *Aspirant* is a term used to refer to members of the *Aspire to Entrepreneurship* program.
5. For more information on *Changing Perceptions* and the *Aspire to Entrepreneurship Program* see <https://www.streetsensemedia.org/article/entrepreneurship-returning-citizens-jobs-reentry/#.WvGg0i-ZORs>

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Reflections on *March for Our Lives*

Samantha Samuel-Nakka

I attended the March for Our Lives rally in Washington D.C. with my family, including my one year old son. When we arrived at the Archives Square metro stop, the Metro Police offered to escort us (and our stroller) out of the station because of the volume of people congregating in the Square. As a Washington D.C. native, it was unlike anything I've ever seen before.

The March brought an estimated 800,000 people to the nation's capital on March 24th to rally around the urgency for gun control and demand an end to gun violence. There were also over 800 "sibling" marches in cities across the globe. One of the first things I noticed when we got to the event was this palpable energy in the air. It was contagious and electrifying. There were people of all ages (from infants decorated with protest signs like my son to grandparents chanting for their grandchildren), races and ethnicity, and from many regions unifying their voices to demand more from their governments and elected officials.

The March organically created a (physically visible) collective community. People were unafraid to engage with strangers, converse with one another, exchange pictures, stories and ultimately find a common thread of solidarity toward the same cause. It was humbling to see that your own individual desire for gun control and ending gun violence was not only a shared sentiment, but was also a tangible majority view, exemplified from the crowd around you. That sense of collectivity made me feel that there *is* strength in numbers and maybe, with this shared unity, change is possible.

Inclusiveness

What struck me most about the March was its extraordinary inclusiveness. This inclusiveness took different forms. The first was the spectrum of speakers on the stage. The organizers successfully broadened the scope of the March from solely being focused on a single event at Parkland, Florida to highlight the

devastating impact of gun violence across the country; from suburban schools like Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School to urban inner cities of South Los Angeles. Aside from this, there was diversity in the representation of the collective voice they projected.

The biggest highlight for me was witnessing *eleven year old* Naomi Wadler use such directed eloquence to demand that black women, who are killed at disproportionate numbers, be included in conversations about gun violence. She said she was there to acknowledge and represent all of the black girls whose stories don't lead on the evening news or make the front pages of newspapers. I have watched her speech online dozens of times since the March and it moves me to tears. Every. Single. Time.



Photo by Samantha Samuel-Nakka

Despite the intersectional approach, I do feel that discussions on the gun violence from police brutality were not represented.

The Signs and the Intersection

The diversity of the speakers and their speeches was certainly matched by a diversity in the crowds. The signs were unapologetic and defiant. There were signs indicating the relationship between gun control and preventing

domestic violence, National Rifle Association's (NRA) involvement in politics, and specific signs calling for House Speaker Paul Ryan to take action. Some of the most memorable signs for me were:

"I want to read books, not eulogies"
"Arm teachers with books, not guns"
"I want to live to see graduation"

...my participation in the March gave me a renewed sense of hope...

I was really impressed by how intersectional the March was, particularly in recognizing and acknowledging that gun violence disproportionately affects people of color. Several people had signs that highlighted the excessive disciplining of black students and there were also many people representing the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Despite the intersectional approach, I do feel that discussions on the gun violence from police brutality were not represented. I personally did not see the adequate inclusion of police brutality in the March agenda, which I believe could have provided another layer to the discussion.

It has been a few weeks since the March and I am still in awe of its ability to generate thoughtful conversation and wake the political consciousness of its participants, particularly the next generation of youth. *Students* really took the lead with the March and have quite successfully showcased the power of youth-led activism. Since the March, they have continued to advocate, encourage people to vote and organized town-halls. These young activists have proven that the March for Our Lives is not a moment, it is a movement.

Most importantly, my participation in the March gave me a renewed sense of hope when I witnessed what these young people are capable of doing. It was the first time since President Trump took office that I have felt hopeful for the future of politics and the state of this country.



DCSS Annual Banquet

Speaker

Cynthia Miller-Idriss
*Associate Professor
of Education and Sociology,
American University*

A Talk About
Her Forthcoming Book

*Seeing the World: How US
Universities Make Knowledge
in a Global Era*

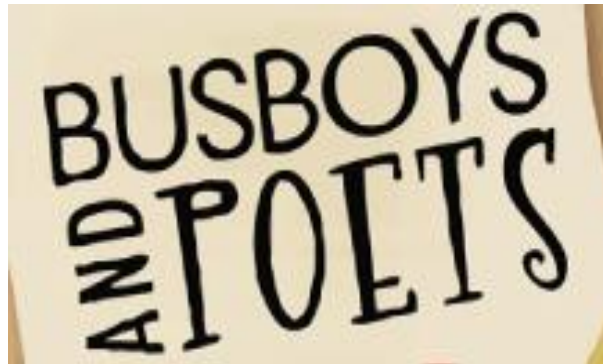
Thursday, May 24, 2018





Annual Banquet & Award Ceremony

Thursday, May 24, 2018



2021 14th Street, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20009



2018 DCSS Awardees



The Morris Rosenberg Award

Amy Best
Professor of Sociology
George Mason University



Irene B. Taeuber Graduate Student Paper Awards

PhD Paper Awardee:
Robert Francis
Johns Hopkins University

PhD Paper Honorable Mention:
Joey Brown
University of Maryland

MA Paper Awardee:
Lauren Walker
The George Washington University



Ask a Sociologist



The Sociologist has officially launched our latest resource called “Ask a Sociologist.”

This is space for our readers and the general public to send us questions about everyday life and have an expert sociologist provide feedback. The “Ask a Sociologist” section is a resource for all who want nontechnical answers to life’s vicissitudes, social conundrums, and challenges. (You are welcome to ask us technical questions too!)

All submissions will remain anonymous, but the questions and responses will be made public so that individuals with similar inquiries can use them as a resource.

Please visit our website, www.thesociologistdc.com to anonymously submit your question.

